Editorial: During these liturgical days, the Acts of the Apostles tell us many stories in which the disciples boldly called for a response to the message of Jesus to spread peace and to reach out compassionately to those in need. They did whatever the Lord called them to do. God’s messengers came through dreams or people in their paths needing assistance. We too are being guided by the Holy Spirit as we strive to determine what is ours to do during this global COVID-19 pandemic. Together we have experience pain and loss and yet we have been encouraged with the big-hearted service of others, particularly the front-liners in the healthcare sector. We need to keep this experience of connectedness alive and maintain solidarity as we create a future that benefits everyone in our common home.

LINKS: Click underlined blue text to open a link or copy and paste the URL on your browser window.

**LAUDATO SI’ SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY YEAR:**
**MAY 24, 2020–MAY 24, 2021**

On May 24, 2015, the watershed encyclical by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, was released, calling the world’s attention to the increasingly precarious state of our common home. Five years later, the encyclical appears ever more relevant. The multiple “cracks in the planet that we inhabit” (LS, 163)—from the melting ice caps in the Arctic to the raging wildfires in the Amazon, from extreme weather patterns around the world to unprecedented levels of loss of biodiversity that sustain the very fabric of life—are too evident and have resulted in widespread damage throughout many parts of the globe. How do we respond to Pope Francis who asks: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (LS, 160) The poor communities are the early victims of the current ecological degradation and we can no longer remain indifferent to the increasingly desperate “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS, 49).

The fifth anniversary of the encyclical comes in the midst of another critical moment—a global pandemic—making the prophetic message of *Laudato Si’* even more significant. The encyclical provides a moral and spiritual guide for the new paradigm that will need to be created—a more caring,

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fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world. The present crisis is a unique opportunity to transform the ongoing destruction around us to a new way of living, bonded together in love, compassion and solidarity, and a more harmonious relationship with the natural world, our common home. COVID-19 has made clear how deeply we are all interconnected and interdependent. As we begin to envision a post-COVID world, we need an integral approach “since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis.” (LS, 137)

Highlighting the significance of Laudato Si’, during this crucial period, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has dedicated May 24, 2020–May 24, 2021 a Special Laudato Si’ Anniversary Year. This year and the ensuing decade, let us come together in grace towards a true Kairos experience that will result in a “Jubilee” time for the Earth, for humanity and for all God’s creatures. The anniversary year will open with Laudato Si’ Week 2020, which begins on May 16, and will proceed with several initiatives, realized in partnership and with a clear emphasis on “ecological conversion” in “action”. Everyone is invited to participate in this anniversary celebration. The urgency of the situation calls for immediate, holistic and unified responses at all levels—local, regional, national and international. With particular focus on the grassroots, the Dicastery is envisioning “a peoples’ movement” and an alliance of all people of goodwill. As Pope Francis says, “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (LS, 14)

Excerpts from the May 16, 2020 press release of the DPIHD, “Laudato Si’ Special Anniversary Year”.

THE GLOBAL SITUATION UNDER COVID-19: THE NEW PARADIGM

It is important to provide an assessment of the current global situation precipitated by the COVI-19 pandemic and to contemplate prospects of the future. We are now faced with many challenges, but we are also being offered many opportunities to help those who are most heavily impacted by this crisis. Our governments and institutions have struggled to contend with the logistics of the pandemic, but often the cries of the unfortunate are not being heard amidst the calamity. In this difficult time, we must stand in solidarity with all the people of the planet, and with the earth itself so that all voices may be heard.

The current global situation brought about by the pandemic is characterized as volatile, complex and ambiguous. The virus has spread rapidly over the world and has created not just a health crisis but economic, political and social crises. The damage and changes that follow will depend on how long the pandemic lasts and the direction those in leadership will take. We are facing a great uncertainty. We hope for the best and prepare for the worst. The shutdown of the economy has led to economic recession and could lead to a global economic depression if the trend continues. Times like these require strategic thinking and acting on the part of those in leadership position whether government or religious. One the most important things that needs to be done is to assess the present situation—the threats and opportunities, the strengths and weaknesses. Since it is difficult to predict or forecast what will happen, building scenarios could be helpful. This piece is an attempt to provide an initial assessment of the global situation and prospects for the future. Making an ongoing assessment of the crisis is the task of every institution, including the Church.

Threats and Weaknesses: The coronavirus continues to spread over the world as the number of cases and fatalities increase. A second wave cannot be ruled out until a cure or vaccine is found. An economic recession and possible depression may result in the breakdown of the economic system. Disruptions to the supply-chain and production may lead to bankruptcies, business closures, unemployment, poverty, and food scarcity. The pandemic manifests the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. Developing economies will suffer the most even if the number of infections is lower than developed countries. All over the world, there is growing hopelessness of so many people, as well as a growing anger and social unrest.

Opportunities and Strengths: Countries in the European Union have pledged to raise $8 billion for the
development of a vaccine. Church and civil society groups are mobilized to give aid to the poor who are mostly affected. Corporations are engaged in charitable contribution. International financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF have expressed willingness to write off debts of developing countries. The UN and the Pope’s global appeal for ceasefire has been heeded in some areas. Since the situation is volatile, it is difficult to forecast what will happen after the pandemic. Analysing worst- and best-case scenarios can be helpful to develop strategies and responses.

- **Scenario 1**—Short-term Pandemic with Rapid Recovery: The pandemic ends soon. There is a discovery of a vaccine or an effective cure. The quarantines are lifted, and the economic recovery is swift due to successful recovery programs.

- **Scenario 2**—Long-Term Pandemic and Depression: The pandemic continues. No effective cures or vaccines have been developed. The virus surges, and cases and fatalities rise. The pandemic continues for four to ten years with quarantines and economic disruption. The recession becomes a global depression. Industries collapse.

- **Scenario 3**—Emergence of a New World: A vaccine or effective cure is produced and distributed world-wide. A new economic order capable of responding to crises emerges. Nations focus efforts to rebuilding their institutions and systems. Developed nations provide humanitarian aid to the less fortunate.

The future is uncertain, but we do know that we are to face many challenges. Our governments and societies have been threatened by the pandemic and the economic depression that has resulted from attempts to contain its spread. But this has given us the opportunity to see and address issues of stark inequitability. The weaknesses of our institutional systems have been shown in the sharp contrast between the fates of the fortunately wealthy “haves” and the defenceless poor “have-nots”. We must now have the strength to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. We must stand in solidarity with all people and with the planet and strive to respond to the crisis with hope and justice.

Click here for the complete article.

**VOICES FROM THE SOUTH: COVID-19, AGE OF EXTRACTIVISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Weekly webinars sponsored by the People’s Dialogue are broadcasted from South Africa. Panelists from around the globe share the painful struggles of persons working in the extractive industries and the devastating impact this has on climate change. The series brings out the narratives of persons suffering from violations of human rights and urges increase in public support for those negatively impacted. With a more united and strengthened voices, change can happen.

Politicizing of the COVID-19 responses and the economic downturn has especially affected the poor. In many places they are being forced to continue working in mining sites. It is difficult to imagine the psychological stress of working in the present conditions without the safety precautions against the coronavirus and the need to earn for food and other necessities.

Evidence is mounting that the deepening crises of the mining and extractive industries continues to worsen despite the public concern voiced by governments. While lockdown and quarantine regulations are being enforced, mining continues in many areas. Permits allowing operations are issued on days when all establishments are required to be closed as corruption continues. Actions of human rights advocates are restricted and an undue number of them being singled out for violation of regulations that prevent advocating for the marginalized.

With these processes in place and restrictions in advocacy during the crisis, concerns are raised about what will happen after the pandemic. It is hoped that through dialogue and solidarity, everyone can benefit in our common home.

**CELEBRATING LAUDATO SI’: EXPLORING AWARENESS, INTEGRATED ACTION AND THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE**

A webinar was held on April 7 to encouraged participants to celebrate the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si’* and join the Roll-out Plan for the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform of the Dicastery for Integrated Human Development (DPIHD) through *Sowing Hope for the Planet*. Several encouraging examples were highlighted to demonstrate the work already being done by Sisters around the world. The immediate goal targets 25 percent of the Sisters to be engaged in environmental friendly activities and influence others to seriously commit to living *Laudato Si’*. 
Sr. Maria de los Angeles Marco Tea of the Congregation Ursulines of Jesus, Canada, demonstrated how her Sisters and their associates in the Americas, Africa and Europe are living *Laudato Si*. In a fascinating way, she explored how their recent document “Suggestions for Actions to a Path of Integral Ecology in the Congregation” is a rich resource for energizing the message of *Laudato Si*. Sr. Maria shared the development of the program, citing inspiring examples of reforestation, local networking, reception of immigrants, promoting the dignity of the Sisters, reduction of plastic usage; careful use of water. She shared their commitment to prisoners, those affected by mining and indigenous populations.

Amy Echeverria, Chair of the GCCM Board, engaged the participants by narrating their meeting with Pope Francis to celebrate the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si*. Pope Francis “commented on the maternal and tender work of GCCM, all its member organizations, partners and the Church to bring *Laudato Si* to life. He affirmed that the work of creating, nurturing, connecting, listening is the work we all share in the care for our common home. In this maternal care, there is a tenderness and compassion that counters the violence.” Pope Francis himself continues to be converted in the living of the encyclical as he continues to listen to the cries of the Earth and the Poor.

For recordings of the session in EN, SP and IT please go to the [Sowing Hope for the Planet](https://sowinghopefortheplanet.org) website.

The next session will be on June 10, 2020 and will focus on giving a global sense to what is happening with *Laudato Si* through the work of the constellations. We are receiving reports from the constellations and there is so much good happening in the world through the work of the religious. There will be an update on the process for action with the 2020 Roll-out Plan.

**SOWING HOPE FOR THE PLANET: CONSTELLATION COMMITMENTS**

A map showing the locations of the 36 constellations of UISG is on the [Sowing Hope for the Planet](https://sowinghopefortheplanet.org) website. These are organized according to language and the geographical locations.

Each constellation has a list of member countries, describing the needs of the Earth and the Poor. Along side the listing are the commitments which have been made by the constellations and their progress to date. This is an opportunity for women religious to learn about what is being done by the generalates in areas where their members are located. We would be grateful to post any information that you would like to share.

It is a very exciting undertaking to provide this rich source of information. This is an opportunity to see the global perspective along with local efforts. We are hoping that as we study and reflect on this information, we can begin to see areas of convergence and highlight all the good that is being done, find ways we can help one another and determine common advocacy efforts. We invite the men religious to be involved in these efforts and provide information for their congregations and location.

**IT TAKES A VIRUS**

Fr. Amado L. Picardal, CSsR

The sky is clear and falcons fly freely in the air. There are no smoke coming out from factories. The rivers and canals are blue. The shops are closed, the streets are empty. Where’s everyone?

Everyone is at home all day long. No need to leave at dawn and come back late at night. Fathers & mothers are playing with their kids. They gather round the table & feast on their meager meal. Food is shared among neighbors or delivered by strangers. They wave and smile at their neighbors from a distance. It’s been a while since they’ve seen each other. They sing at the top of their voices or play the guitar in their balconies and rooftops and get a round of applause. When was the last time this happened?

The classrooms are empty. Lessons are learned at home. There are no school-children running in the corridors and gyms except for the homeless who have been welcomed and fed after being driven away by petty barangay despots and police from a religious center that fed them for not staying at home. Priests celebrate mass on empty churches as the faithful watch them online in their homes.
The pope gives his blessing in front of an empty square watched by millions of people around the world. No distance, quarantine or lock down can separate them.

The guns are silent. The fighting has ceased. The combatants have gone home. Logging and mining have stopped. The forests get a respite. The pangolins can frolic in the forest and bats fly freely. The earth has been given a chance to rest. Meanwhile the hospitals are full as the sick multiply and the dead cremated hastily.

We are now on depression mentally and economically. Inept leaders have been exposed and found wanting while the true servant-leaders are being discovered. Bumbling politicians are trembling knowing their time is up.

The world whole is sick, gasping for breath. Economic and political systems are collapsing and new ones will emerge. Release of GHG have been reduced and the ecological crisis can be averted.

Can good come out from a bad situation? Felix Culpa. Let’s count our blessings. The end is near. But not for us but for a system that puts profit over people where leaders are elected for their image and messianic pretensions rather their competence and compassion.

When this is over it will not be business as usual. It will be different. Much better—we hope. “Behold, I will make all things new”. Someone said long ago. It only takes a virus to trigger this.

The rest is up to us now.

**19 May**—Online Prayer with the theme “Everything is Connected”, as we focus on Our Web of Life. From 11 am to 12 pm (Rome time) in English and Spanish. There will be a number of prayer experiences and important and exciting events posted on line from May 16 to 23. Topics include eco-spirituality, sustainability, advocacy and social action. For more information, please go to [https://laudatosiweek.org/](https://laudatosiweek.org/). Clack to register for the **weekday sessions**. For now, you are welcome to download the prayer card here and plan to pray at noon local time on 24 May.

**20 May**—Africa Working Group, 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm. Online

**29 May**—Online: Prayer prepared by the Spanish/Portuguese Promoters on the theme, “Mary Sign of Hope” from 6 to 7 pm.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**30 November 30 to 4 December 4**—JPIC Formation Workshop. The theme will be ‘Laudato Si’ in the spirit of Querida Amazonia. This workshop provides new Promoters with the tools needed to animate members of their congregation. Others engaged in JPIC-related ministries are welcome to attend the full workshop or individual sessions.

**POPE FRANCIS INTENTION**

That **deacons**, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.

**10 June**—Webinar Sowing Hope for the Planet “Living Laudato Si’: Reflecting on a Global Plan.” Pope Francis calls us to ponder how: “Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan”. (LS 164) These words underlie and exciting session that explores a global plan for Laudato Si’. Br. Albert Parise, mccj will develop an action process for religious to consider in actualizing the message of Laudato Si’. Sr. Catherine Barange, Sisters of St. Joseph de Lyons, will share the amazing work of the UISG Constellation of France, (40 Congregations) in response to the needs of the Earth and the Poor. Updates on the overall Roll out Plan for the Catholic Communities around the world, will be described by Laura Noctor-King, Sustainability Director of GCCM. The session will be from 2 pm to 4 pm (Rome time) with translations in EN, ES, FR, IT.

**MAY INTERNATIONAL DAYS**

**9 May**—Fair Trade Day 2020 is a global event that aims to draw attention to the objectives and achievements of the Fair Trade movement by highlighting solutions and actions. Organized by the World Fair Trade Organisation, the aim of the day is to celebrate Fair Trade and encourage the public to, where possible, choose Fair Trade goods, becoming fair and ethical consumers.

**JPIC PROMOTERS MEETINGS**

**LAUDATO SI’ WEEK 2020**

**16-24 May**—Laudato Si’ Week, 5th Anniversary

**16 May**—“Promoting Integral Ecology in the Digital Age”. Featured Fr. Martin Carbajo Nunez, OFM, from the University of the Antonianum and author of ‘Integral Ecology and Communication in the Digital Era’. Further explorations of the topic were developed by Sr. Bernadette Reis, FSP, member of the Dicastery for Social communication and the Vatican News. Her area “Mass Media Communication and Promotion of Integral Ecology”. Fr. Amado Picardal, CSsR, Co-Executive Secretary of the JPIC Commission of USG-UISG and author of several books on ecclesiology, environment and social transformation, discussed the topic of “Social Media as a Means of Promoting Integral Ecology.” The session was a very informative and enriching spiritual experience. This event is sponsored by the JPIC Commission of USG-UISG. Videos in English and Spanish will be available on the [JPIC website] next week.
15 May—The **International Day of the Families 2019** theme: “Families and Climate Action: Focus on SDG 13.” The day promotes education and awareness of issues and calls forth the integrating of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

16 May—The **International Day of Living Together in Peace** is to promote the creation of “a worldwide movement in favor of an awareness that a fraternal bond based on the Culture of Peace is a necessity for Humanity.”

21 May—**World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development** celebrates cultural diversity as a means of providing new perspectives for sustainable development and promoting creative industry resources for millions of jobs worldwide—particularly for youth and women.

22 May—**International Day for Biological Diversity** stresses the theme “Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health.” In so doing it recognizes that biodiversity is the foundation for life and for the essential services provided by ecosystems.

23 May—**End Obstetric Fistula Day** is meant to significantly raise awareness and intensify actions towards ending obstetric fistula. Sufferers often endure depression, social isolation and deepening poverty.

16-24 May—Fifth Anniversary of **Laudato Si’**, May 16-24, 2020. Pope Francis asks, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who will come after us?” He invites all to participate in observance as he renews his urgent call to respond to the ecological crisis, “The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor cannot continue.” Pope Francis invites the Church to celebrate **Laudato Si’ Week**.

29 May—**International Day of UN Peacekeepers** honors the more than one million men and women who have served under the UN flag with care and courage since 1948. More than 3,400 have lost their lives in service.

**Click here for a listing of the international days for the year.**

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**MAY 31 IS PENTECOST SUNDAY**

*Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the Earth.* —Psalm 104, 30

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**PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS: VATICAN COVID-19 COMMISSION**

Pope Francis creates a Commission to express the Church's solicitude and care for the whole human family facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

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